



# THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD (MCLB) MANUAL



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## 1. INTRODUCTION & HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) is the public library system for residents of Montgomery County, Maryland. MCPL currently comprises 21 local libraries, a library in the County's correctional facility, and a virtual services branch. The Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB) was established on May 31, 1950 and authorized by Montgomery County Code 243 governing the Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL). Establishment of public libraries in Maryland is subject to the terms of Maryland State Code 23-30l:

(a) Establishment and Support: the governing body of each county may establish and appropriate an amount to support a county public library system free from political influence.

(b) Board of Library Trustees: each county public library system shall be governed by a board of trustees. However, a charter county may establish a county library agency and grant it some or all of the powers of a board of trustees; or have a board of library trustees, provide for the Board's selection, and determine its powers. (An. Code 1957, art. 77, && 171, 172; 1978, ch. 22, & 2.)

According to Montgomery County Code 2006, Section 246 et seq., the Board is established as an advisory board, but it has authority on its own motion, or on reference from the County Executive, to inquire into matters affecting the County public library system and to provide guidance and advice on a wide range of library matters.

The Montgomery County Library Board (MCLB), was established to assist and advise the County Executive and the Library Director on matters pertaining to the organization and management of libraries. Another responsibility of MCLB is to serve as the voice of the community on library issues in the county and as an advocacy group for public libraries on both local, statewide, and national levels. The MCLB reports its findings and recommendations on these issues to the County Executive through the MCPL Director. In 1953 the MCLB adopted the Library Bill of Rights recommended by the American Library Association and continues to be guided by these Bill of Rights.

The Board originally (1950) consisted of ten members serving for three years. In 1985, the Board membership was expanded to 12 with staggered terms of service to avoid all members' terms ending simultaneously. Two additional ex officio members of the Library Board are representatives from the Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College.

The bylaws under which the Library Board operate, and which this Library Board manual are based, can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/board/bylaws.html>.

## **2. MISSION, GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MCLB**

The mission of the Montgomery County Library Board is to advise the Montgomery County Executive and MCPL Director on matters related to library policies, services, and facilities.

To fulfill this mission, the MCLB is authorized to:

- Liaise with Library Advisory Committees (LACs) for each Library Branch to maintain effective communications between MCLB and LACs by attending LAC meetings and other interactions. The Board recommends that each board member serve as liaison to two or more MCPL branches.
- Provide the MCPL Director with feedback from LACs and other interested groups as well as facilitate communication among MCPL administration, the County Executive's Office, the LACs, library patrons, and the Friends of the Library Montgomery County (FOLMC)
- Take a lead role in library advocacy activities including testifying before various government bodies e.g., the Montgomery County Council, the Maryland Legislature, the US Congress, and public hearings and meetings, Federal, State, and/or County officials and otherwise support public libraries in Montgomery County, serving as a major "voice of the community" on library issues and policies
- Recruit and involve volunteers from the community to advocate for, assist the MCPL.

According to Section 254 of the County Code, the Board is authorized to approve all library fine structures and other administrative rules as appropriate to the conduct of necessary library service in Montgomery County.

The Board will also review the Board manual and revise, as appropriate, in the fall of each year, subsequently voting and approving any modifications at the October meeting of the Board.

## **3. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF MCLB**

The Library Board comprises twelve members representing the Montgomery County community at large, and two additional ex-officio non-voting members, representing Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Montgomery College. The Board activities are managed by a chair and a vice-chair. Section 6 OFFICERS OF MCPL describes their responsibilities. The 12 volunteer members do not receive compensation.

In addition, subcommittees of the Board called Library Advisory committees (LACs) advise the Board and work with Regional and local Branch Agency Managers. There is an additional subcommittee, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, that provides the Library Board with information related to issues involving the county's vision, hearing and mobility communities.

Section 7 MCLB WORK GROUPS AND LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEES describe these groups and their responsibilities. All Board members may sit on at least one of the Board's Work Groups. Information on current members, officers, liaisons and their terms are provided at MCPL website

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/board/index.html>.

#### **4. SELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

##### ***a. Vacancy Announcements***

The County Executive's Office periodically announces vacancies on the Montgomery County Library Board and calls for applications from individuals interested in serving on the MCLB. Any resident of Montgomery County with an interest in libraries is eligible to serve on the Board. The County Executive Office widely distributes announcements to County Government Offices, public libraries, and on County websites. The announcements include the number of vacancies available, the deadline for applying, and where to submit resumes with a cover letter to the County Executive's Office.

##### ***b. Confidential Review of Applications and Selection***

The MCLB Chair, in conjunction with the Director of Montgomery County Libraries, invites members of the Board to serve on the Library Board Nominating Committee, which screens and selects candidates to interview. The MCLB Chair also typically serves as Chair of this Committee, though other MCLB members may serve as necessary.

Members in the final year of their term and are seeking reappointment cannot serve on the nominating committee.

The County Executive's Office sends copies of all applications received to the Library Board Nominating Committee. The Library Director's Office staff contacts the candidates and sets up appointments for interviews by the Nominating Committee and the Library Director. The Nominating Committee selects the eligible candidates and ranks them. The Committee may recommend more candidates than available slots to allow the County Executive a wide choice and the opportunity to ensure that their selections help the Board represent the entire County in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, and geographic location. The Nominating Committee Chair reports the Committee's recommendations to the County Executive for further review. The County Executive submits the final list of selected candidates to the Council for concurrence. Upon confirmation by the County Council, the County Executive notifies the successful candidates of their appointments and terms of their office.

The new full-term Members usually assume their official duties at the end of September, while those appointed to complete unexpired terms assume duties immediately upon notification.

### ***c. Terms of Service of Board Members***

Prior to the end of the initial term of three years, the retiring members can apply for a second three-year term. Those appointed to fill unexpired terms may apply for a first full term. Their selections will take place according to the procedure described above. A member cannot serve more than a total of eight years.

The terms of service of members of the MCLB are staggered so that each year only four members retire. This assures that all members do not retire simultaneously and that a cadre of experienced members always remain on the Board.

A member is deemed to have resigned from the Board if he/she misses 25 percent or more of scheduled meetings during any six-month period, unless excused by the Board on prior request to the County Executive's office. Voluntary resignations, in writing, must be directed to the County Executive at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD, 20850 or [countyexecutive.boards@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:countyexecutive.boards@montgomerycountymd.gov).

### ***d. Orientation of New Members***

The MCPL Director and/or senior members of the Board provide an orientation to new members. The orientation will focus on the operations and responsibilities of the Library Board, the Library Department, and the relationship with the County government. There are two trainings that all new members are required to take: Maryland Open Meetings Act and Parliamentary Procedures.

### ***e. Ethical requirements***

The Montgomery County Library Board members are subject to the provisions of the Montgomery County Public Ethics Law, Chapter 19A of the Montgomery County Code, as amended periodically, the latest effective April 1, 2010. The details of the law can be obtained from MCPL staff.

## **5. MCLB MEETINGS**

Library Board and Committee meetings are open to the public and subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Act (available in the MCPL Department). Observers do not ordinarily participate in Board or Committee discussions. However, if time permits, they may be permitted to make a brief statement at the conclusion of the Board or Committee meeting.

The Board holds monthly meetings usually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month except when the Board may recess in summer. The Board may, at its discretion waive a scheduled meeting due to holidays, snow, etc. Meetings generally begin at 7:00 p.m., end at 9:00 p.m., and are held in the Library Board Room of the Montgomery County Public Libraries Administrative Offices or remotely using an online platform. Board members are to be notified in a timely fashion of any changes in the time and place of meetings. The Chair can change the time, place, and duration of the meetings in consultation with the Board and the Director of Libraries. A quorum for transacting Board business is a simple majority of the appointed Board members.

A Library Board calendar is published on the MCPL website. Board Liaisons should provide MCPL staff with the dates of LAC meetings and any other relevant information for inclusion in the Board minutes and calendar.

Seated at the Board table, or attending via MS Teams, are the 14 members of the Board, the MCPL Director, and a staff member to record the proceedings and serve in a secretarial capacity. Other Department staff or invited guests are called to the table for presentations or clarification of issues.

Recordings of the meetings are used for transcription and assuring correctness of minutes, and are kept as a public record for six months.

Montgomery County requires that each department keep a running account of the time volunteers donate. These figures are collected semiannually and are reported to the community. To facilitate this endeavor, Board members are asked to keep track of their time spent on Library Board functions and report the time totals on the volunteer time sheets distributed at Board meetings.

## I. Agenda

Prior to Board meetings, an agenda prepared by the Chair with input from the Director is sent to Board members. The agenda might include, but is not limited to, announcements, approval of the previous meeting's minutes, the Director's Report, and LAC updates, an occasional presentation by an invited guest speaker, committee reports, new or old business.

Library Board agendas are disseminated to LAC Chairs, Department executives and Agency Managers. An agenda is also posted in all branch libraries and the website for public view.

## II. Library Board Minutes

The MCPL Director, with the aid of Department staff, is responsible for providing Library Board minutes.

Board minutes should include the date and place of the meeting and the times the meeting convened and adjourned, whether a quorum was present, the names of Board members in attendance and those absent, Department staff, and guests. The minutes should record whether the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

The minutes should summarize all discussions, including committee, work group reports, LAC liaison reports, and presentations by invited guests. Summaries of comments by observers should be limited to one very brief paragraph each. For any motions made, the minutes should record the wording of the motion, the members making and seconding the motion, whether the motion passed, and the vote count.

The MCPL Director and the Board Chair review a typed draft of the Library Board minutes before presenting to the Board for approval. A majority of the vote of the

Board must approve minutes of Library Board meetings. A vote on approval is usually taken at the meeting following the one in which the minutes were taken. Minutes approved by the Board are distributed to Library Board members at each meeting. A copy is posted on the MCPL website within 30 days of the Board's approval of the minute.

Copies are also sent by email to the three County Council representatives on the **Health and Human Services committee**, the County Council President, and the Office of the County Executive.

The County Code requires that a copy of approved Library Board minutes is filed with the Office of Public Information. These copies are stored online for approximately 15 to 20 years. Copies of older approved Library Board minutes are archived and can be reviewed by making a request to the Office of Public Information. Recordings of Board meetings are kept for six months.

## **6. OFFICERS OF MCLB**

Two office-holders, the Chair and the Vice-chair, lead the MCLB. Candidates for office are presented at a Board meeting where members elect the new officers by majority vote for a term of two years. The Chair and Vice-chair may be elected to an additional one-year term. It is expected that the Vice-chair, presuming acceptable performance of duties, will succeed the Chair at the end of either the two-year or three-year term. The election of officers is conducted no later than the July Board meeting of the appropriate year.

### **a. Duties and Responsibilities of the Chair**

The Chair presides at Board meetings and also all other meetings and events sponsored or organized by the Board and will:

- Serve as the official spokesperson for the Library Board. The Chair may designate another Board member to speak on specific issues. When so designated the Board member may not represent his/her own personal opinions but is required to present the position of the Chair of the Board.
- Prepare the agenda with input from the Director for each Board meeting
- Review and edit draft minutes prepared by Director or staff for review and approval by the Board
- Maintain regular contact with Board members and the MCPL Director and keep members informed on issues and activities affecting the Board
- Assign Board members to LACs as liaisons, Board Work Groups, and special "ad hoc" committees, and other projects
- Maintain communication with library officials statewide.
- Represent the Library Board at County Council budget hearings, before the State Legislature, and at other forums



- Oversee maintenance of the Board calendars
- Prepare and oversee distribution of Board correspondence
- Ensure that new Board members' orientation is conducted shortly after their appointments
- Prepare and submit the Library Board's annual report to the County Executive
- Prepare and mentor the Vice-chair for the assumption of Chair duties at the end of a term

#### **b. Duties and Responsibilities of the Vice-chair**

The Vice-Chair will:

- In the absence or at the request of the Chair, the Vice-chair will Preside at Board meetings, as well as other meetings and events organized and sponsored by the Board
- Represent the Library Board at County Council budget hearings, before the State Legislature, and other forums as the representative of the Library Board
- Carry out special assignments or projects
- Carry out any other duties which are normally assigned to the Chair.

### **7. MCLB WORK GROUPS AND MCLB LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Work groups of board members provide MCLB officers and the Board input on the status and needs in specified areas of the Board's concern. In addition, The County Code establishes subcommittees of the Library Board, referred to as Library Advisory Committees.

#### **a. MCLB Work Groups**

The Chair selects and assigns Board Members to the Work Groups at the first meeting of the fiscal year (September), based on input from Board members, balancing the distribution of experienced and new members within each committee. All Board members may serve on one or more the Work Group(s). Each Group elects a Leader.

Currently there are three work groups. The number of work groups can be increased or decreased by the Chair in consultation with the Board, if warranted by on-going needs or future workloads.

#### **b. Work Group Meetings**

When needed, the Work Groups meetings are convened by the Leaders when needed to discuss and make recommendations on matters that concern the Group. Board members who do not belong to a Work Group may attend meetings and participate in discussions. Outside observers may also attend the Work Group meetings, but may

not participate in discussions. Library Board Work Groups may meet in conjunction with the Board meetings or separately as needed.

#### I. LAC Activities Work Group

This Work Group monitors the Board's relations with the LACs and recommends policy and procedural issues involving the two bodies to the Library Board. This Group is responsible for

- planning and coordinating joint activities and events by the Board and LACs, (e.g., biannual and regional meetings such as ALA Day and Legislative Day in Annapolis).
- preparing materials, when needed, such as handbooks or briefing papers useful for orienting the new LAC members.
- Revising LAC handbooks each fall.

#### II. Legislative and Public Affairs Work Group

This Work Group develops strategies and is responsible for planning activities, events, and campaigns involving the Board's Task include:

- Legislative advocacy efforts, such as coordinating Board and LAC testimonies at public hearings on the County's capital and operating budget and coordinating meetings with elected officials
- Making recommendations on County and Statewide library legislation.
- Representing Montgomery County on the Maryland Library Association Legislative Panels.
- Coordinate with other advocacy groups in these activities.

#### III. Library Policy and Practices Work Group

This Work Group is responsible for reviewing and advising MCPL on library policies and practices and reviewing the long-range Facilities Plan of MCPL. The primary functions of this Work Group are to:

- Make recommendations on the creation of, or changes to, policies, programs, delivery of services that significantly impact library users
- Review and make recommendations about library policy areas such as proposed changes in library service hours, major changes in loan periods and fines, revisions in policy on basic and fee-based services, and major changes in services such as holds/reserves, public awareness campaigns, and press relations
- Make recommendations to the Library Board and the Department on Program of Requirements (POR) plans for new facilities or library renovations
- Advise on County Capital Improvement Programs (CIP)
- Advise on specific problem areas such as parking, lighting, disabled access

### **c. Role of MCLB members on Library Advisory Committees (LACs)**

LACs function as the voice of the community surrounding its library. They recruit members to ensure that it adequately represents the community. Working with the Board Liaisons, the LACs advise the Board of its activities, and specific issues, problems, or concerns. The membership of the LAC should, if possible, reflect the demographic of the respective local community. There are 23 Library Advisory Committees, one for each library branch and one representing accessibility needs within the county.

It is recommended that each Library Board member serve as a Board Liaison to two or more Library Advisory Committees. Liaison assignments are made by the Board Chair in September of each year. Liaisons will act as the conduits between the Board and LACs, ensuring LAC adherence to the Board's operational procedures and work to strengthen and improve communications between the Board and the LACs by developing good working relationships with the LAC Chair and the Library Manager.

Liaisons send copies of all relevant Board and Department announcements, reminders of any deadlines for actions requested of the LACs, and encourage timely compliance. Board Liaisons encourage the fulfillment of routine administrative responsibilities of LACs by:

- Assisting the LAC in its efforts to acquire a large enough membership to adequately reflect the diversity of the community being served.
- Reminding each LAC to submit its updated LAC membership list to the Director's Office by September for submission to the Board in October.
- Reminding the LAC to hold elections for officers and communicate the election results to the Director's Office before June 1 annually
- Encouraging the LAC to send representatives to the joint Board/LAC/FOLMC meeting held each year
- Encouraging and promoting communication and cooperation among LACs
- Ensuring the approved LAC agenda template is being used for all meetings.

LACs must schedule a minimum of five (5) meetings and hold at least three (3) meetings a year between September and August, but many meet more often if deemed necessary. Liaisons are expected to attend all meetings of their assigned LACs. As stated in the LAC Manual, LAC meetings can be held in-person or online (e.g., Zoom) to comply with the Maryland State Open Meetings Act.

At the LAC meetings, Liaisons make reports of the minutes of the Board meetings, on actions taken or planned by the Board, and elicit input from each LAC on library issues of concern.

### **d. Committees**

The Board Chair may establish a Nominating Committee or other ad hoc committees as needed.

## **8. SPECIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE MCLB**

During the year, the Board may participate in or host several special activities and annual events. A description of these activities is listed below.

### **a. Meeting with the LACs and the FOLMC**

The Board hosts at least one meeting during the year for the LACs and Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Inc. The LACs and FOLMC members are encouraged to take part in developing the program by offering to give presentations. Programming is generally informational and educational.

### **b. Maryland Library Trustee's Meeting**

Each year, the Maryland State Library Agency holds a one-day meeting to which all library trustees in the State of Maryland are invited. The purpose of the meeting is to provide the trustees with updates on issues of interest to libraries across the State. The meeting serves a developmental purpose as session topics and presentations may cover a wide variety of issues important to developing advocacy skills in library trustees. The meeting also provides a forum for networking by library trustees.

### **c. Annual Meeting with the County Executive**

Selected members of the Board and the Director meet with the County Executive once a year, with Boards, Committees and Commissions. The purpose of the meeting is to update the County Executive on the Board's activities and provide a briefing on issues the Board would like the County Executive to consider. The date of the meeting, usually in the fall or winter, varies depending on the County Executive's schedule.

### **d. Legislative Day in Annapolis**

During the General Assembly's winter legislative session in Annapolis, the MCPL Director works with the Board's Legislative and Public Affairs Committee to organize a delegation, including representatives of the Library Board, to visit Montgomery County's elected representatives in Annapolis and make a brief presentation. Individual meetings with delegates and senators may also be scheduled.

### **e. County Council Public Hearings on Budget**

The County Executive's Budget Hearings are held in February. The Operating Budget hearings with Council Members are held in April. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) hearings before the County Council are scheduled during even-numbered years in February. The Library Board coordinates the selection and briefing of individuals from the LACs who will testify at these hearings along with the Board representative.

**f. National Library Legislative Day**

During April or May of each year, MCPL may organize a delegation of library advocates, including Library Board members, to join with other delegations meeting in Washington, DC for an event hosted by the American Library Association's Washington Office. The event allows delegates to meet with their respective representatives and senators.

Individual as well as group meetings with legislators are scheduled throughout the day.

**g. Meeting with the Montgomery County Council Members**

The Board meets with the County Council members each year. The purpose of the meeting is to provide an opportunity for Board members and Council members to talk informally and for the Board members to advocate for the County Council to approve library priorities, in particular the Operating Budget.

**h. Public Forums**

Occasionally the Library Board may organize, coordinate, and host one or more public forums or activities to solicit comments from residents on specific library issues. Library Board members are also encouraged to attend meetings of the American Library Association (ALA), Public Library Association (PLA), United for Libraries (Association for Library Trustees and Advocates – formerly American Libraries Trustees Association (ALTA)), the Maryland Library Association (MLA), and the Urban Libraries Council (ULC).

**i. Awards**

A program of Achievement Awards was initiated in 1995-1996 under which the Library Board may publicly recognize and honor special achievements by its LACs and/or individual members of LACs at an awards ceremony.

**9. FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY MONTGOMERY COUNTY (FOLMC)**

The Friends of the Library Montgomery County and the Library Board are separate entities that hold two joint meetings over the year to discuss advocacy and other issues. The Friends of the Library is a 501(c)(3) non-profit authorized to raise money to support the Montgomery County Library System. Please see the FOLMC Website for more information: <https://www.folmc.org/>.